

Testimony for Public Hearing  
Referred to Committee on Select Committee on Children  
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H.B. 5186-A act Adopting a Foster Parent Bill of Rights

Good afternoon Madame Chair Urban and Madame Chair Gerretana, and members of the Select Committee for Children. Thank you for the opportunity to hear me today.

My name is Robin Kozloski, my husband Ron and I have been foster parents for about 14 years. We have adopted 6 children that are ages 3 to 14 years of age and have fostered many more. For the most part it has been a very challenging and rewarding venture. Life as you know it is changed for ever just like many families that are involved with the foster care system we too have our share of problems that end in utter chaos.

We are asking for your support for The Foster Parent Bill of Rights. As you read this bill you will see that most of what is written is already DCF policy, however, it is not always put into practice. We are told that we are part of the "The Team" but are very often left out of the loop.

It is my belief that the more information and support we are given, the more effective we can be as good foster parents. Our goal is to provide these children with the love, security, and any other services that they may need.

We need this bill as a reminder that we as foster parents are a valuable source in the well being of these children. We know them better than most after taking care of them 24-7. We know their habits, their needs, their fears, and when they something that we can not give them, we need to be heard, so that we can receive the support from DCF to ensure the best for these children.

I would like to take this time to give you a couple of examples of how the the foster care system has not worked for me:

We had a teenage foster daughter who came into our care because she was sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend with whom her mother continued to live with. Our foster daughter was originally from the Middletown office where we received lots of support and guidance. That social worker was truly awesome. Bio mom showed no signs of wanting to help her daughter so the case was transferred to the Waterbury office. This is when our nightmare began. While our foster daughter was in our care, for almost 2 1/2 years, she began to adjust to family life and started to do better in school. We promised her that if she graduated high school that we would take her to Disney World. We set this goal together as she would be the first in her family to graduate and she was on her way.

The first family visit she went on her social worker defied a court order and then lied about it.

When we questioned these actions, we were called to DCF, put in a private and made to feel like we were the ones who were at fault. We were shocked and angry. The long and the short of this story is they supported the worker and we were left hanging in the wind. After this situation, the social worker started to retaliate by creating her own agenda. It was totally exhausting trying to

stay one step ahead of her to try and preserve this placement. The worker was banned from the property of the therapy sessions because of her actions. This was a big waste of energy and was very detrimental to the placement. To make a long story short, our foster daughter at the age of 16 decided to check herself out of foster care and return home to bio family where the abuser still lived. Within a week of her return, she was arrested for using drugs on school property.

My second story still to this day tears at my heart. This speaks more to the emotions that we as a family go through.

We received a beautiful newborn baby girl. Her mother was a nasty heroine addict. For 18 months this mother did nothing to try and get her baby back. After being asked to consider being an adoptive resource. And agreeing, we found out that in between her 2 incarcerations she was pregnant again. She was faced with 2 choices, jail or a program. She opted for the program and with minimal effort and using loopholes in the system she was awarded her child back. It was very emotional to sit there and hear the judge say, I think you will fail with your attitude but hear is your child anyway. I did my best and befriended bio mom, hoping to stay involved for this baby we had raised for over 2 years, for her protection and my own sanity. I realized that I could not continue this because I could not partake in the life style that bio mom led.

I was torn, her emotionally bonded siblings, my children, wanted to know when she was coming home. I knew this was going to fail---but she was bio mom!

The system failed us and that child. I waited and finally 4 years later not only is she back in DCF custody but 2 other siblings. She could have stayed with us. In a safe and loving home. Imagine how much these children have been through.

There is more, feel free to contact me.

In closing, my stories are just the tip of the iceberg, in a long line of failures. Please help us by passing this bill so that together we all can do what is right for the children who are the most vulnerable players in this system. I would also like to say that there are many awesome social workers and supervisors in the DCF system and when you are lucky enough to be able to work with one, the process is so much more pleasant and rewarding.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin M Kozloski